Kagan Cooperative Learning Program could lend a hand to the problem Hickory Ridge High School is having with test scores declining. This promising innovative program brings students together to work towards one goal of being academically successful. Teachers at Hickory Ridge High would attend trainings on how to implement the program by actively participating in the curriculum with the structures meant for students. Teachers actively learn how to execute structures by experiencing them firsthand. A structure is a step by step activity that is meant to increase student’s engagement and cooperation with each other. These activities allow the students to work together and collaborate in the learning process. When teachers are being trained on the program, the teachers of Hickory Ridge High will be asked to work together and to collaborate to complete the training. The teacher’s teams or cooperative groups will be determined by a Kagan structure, not by teachers choosing who to sit with. This allows teachers to get familiar with other staff members and to help gain mutual respect for each other. When working in an unfamiliar team, you are pushed to learn more about each other to successfully complete tasks and as an end result the faculty would be more united and understanding of each other’s talents and perspectives. Younger teachers at the high school could potentially learn something new as well as the more experienced teachers could have a new prospective brought to their attention that would help shape their teaching abilities.

One of Hickory Ridge High Schools main challenges is the division between the older and newer staff members. Principal O’ Conner needs to motivate and encourage his staff to work together toward one common vision statement. A school in the northeast that completed the Kagan Development Program successfully brought the staff together by using this modern program. The principal used structures with the faculty to build a sense of community and team within the school. (Bromley & Modlo, 2007) According to Bromley and Modlo, the principal and the other staff members who were trained to use structures, used them with the staff at monthly meetings, on conference days, with the Building Planning Team (a site-based decision-making group) and with other task forces within the school. The principal also offered to model cooperative learning structures in the classrooms of teachers who had not received the in-service training. If principal O’ Conner used these structures, he would then be looked at as an instructional leader supporting the teacher’s efforts to better meet the needs of the students. Once the principal took on this active role, he would establish a school climate that promoted experimentation and risk taking. (Bromley & Modlo, 2007)

One major component to Hickory Ridge High Schools reform stems from the continuous professional growth in leadership. Principal O’ Conner’s leadership style is having a huge impact on why the school is unable to grow and improve. According to McGregor’s Theory X approach, Principal O’ Conner currently falls into this category of an autocratic leadership style. The expectation of the district is to implement a new technology driven curriculum and to do so the principal will need to examine his Theory X assumptions and move more towards a democratic approach of leading his staff. According to Cunningham and Cordeiro, the Theory Y approach is collaborative and encourages team efforts to develop and express themselves to better the organization. Many of the staff members are young and motivated, so the transition from managing his staff to empowering his staff should help Principal O’ Conner shift his leadership style. Since the staff members would be given the opportunity to participate in the decision making process, the staff would feel more ownership and pride in the school. He also needs to recognize the staff member’s enthusiasm to collaborate which will lead to the teachers feeling more empowered and united. (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2009)

In order for Principal O’ Conner to fully empower his staff members, he must give them the freedom to take risks and feel support from the administration, through walk-throughs and conferencing. Promoting collaboration throughout the school and within grade levels will create a better professional community and will result in teachers feeling motivated to create engaging, technological lessons. As the educators see their collaborations as a success, they will continue to work together towards achieving the goal of becoming a more effective school.

**References**

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